



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Rich.Malinowski@noaa.gov

727-824-5305, FAX 727-824-5308

December 3, 2015

FB15-089

NOAA Fisheries Announces Greater Amberjack Allowable Harvest and Management Measures in the Gulf of Mexico for 2016 and Beyond

Small Entity Compliance Guide

NOAA Fisheries announces changes to greater amberjack management measures in the Gulf of Mexico. The final rule to implement the following measures in the Gulf of Mexico published on December 2, 2015 (80 FR 75432). The rule will be effective January 4, 2016. The rule will:

- Decrease the total annual catch limit from 1,780,000 pounds whole weight to 1,720,000 pounds whole weight.
- Set the commercial annual catch limit at 464,400 pounds whole weight and the commercial quota at 394,740 pounds whole weight.
- Set the recreational annual catch limit at 1,255,600 pounds whole weight and the recreational quota at 1,092,372 pounds whole weight.
- Reduce the commercial trip limit from 2,000 pounds whole weight to 1,500 pounds gutted weight.
- Increase the minimum recreational size limit from 30 inches fork length to 34 inches fork length.

The 2014 greater amberjack population assessment indicates additional management measures are necessary to rebuild the greater amberjack population in the Gulf of Mexico. Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack are currently overfished (population abundance is too low) and undergoing overfishing (rate of removal too high).

The final rule reduces the commercial and recreational annual catch limits based upon the 2014 population assessment. The intent of this reduction is to end overfishing and rebuild the Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack fishery.

The final rule reduces the commercial trip limit. This will reduce the likelihood of exceeding the commercial quota and is intended to extend the commercial fishing season.

The recreational size limit increases from 30 inches fork length to 34 inches fork length. A 30 inch fish is two years old and fish of that size generally have not reached sexual maturity. Research shows eighty-five percent of 34 inch fish have reached sexual maturity, but only 11 percent are estimated to reach sexual maturity at 30 inches. Additionally, increasing the size limit is expected to lengthen the recreational fishing season.

Electronic copies of the final rule and supporting documents may be obtained from NOAA Fisheries Web site:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2015/greater_amberjack_framework/index.html.